



## Oakland school district, teachers prepare for Thursday strike

**District encourages families to send their children to school**

By Katy Murphy  
Oakland Tribune

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OAKLAND — Public schools in the city will be open Thursday, though many teachers — and some students — will be in picket lines outside, rather than in class.

The Oakland school district administration reports it has hired more than 300 emergency substitutes and nurses for the one-day teacher strike, and that at least 60 workers from the central administration offices will be sent to the schools to cover for striking teachers.

"Our schools will be open and it is important for students to attend classes as usual," the administration told families in an informational packet.

Staffing levels will be far lower than usual, however; the Oakland Education Association represents about 2,500 classroom teachers, counselors, nurses and librarians, most of whom are expected to strike.

Last week, the Oakland school board voted unanimously to impose a contract on the union more than two years after the two sides began

negotiations, a move that angered and disappointed many teachers. The contract includes no changes in pay or compensation, but it allows for an increase in class sizes. It also lets the district hire hourly workers, rather than contract employees, for its adult education programs.

The teacher union had demanded a 15 percent pay increase for its members, who are among the lowest paid in Alameda County, as well as smaller caseloads for counselors and nurses and small class sizes. The district administration, which is planning to cut next year's total operating budget by about 20 percent, says a "status quo contract" was the best it could do.

In January, the teachers voted to authorize a one-day strike, but union leaders said they had hoped to reach an agreement first.

Though it's clear where most teachers will stand Thursday, members of the district's other labor unions are in a trickier position. While union members are generally loath to cross picket lines, these groups have already reached settlements with the school district that contain no-strike clauses, said Oakland Education Association President Betty Olson-Jones.

"The other unions stand in solidarity with us, but they're also under the constraint of not being able to officially strike," Olson-Jones said.

Olson-Jones said employees might be able to skirt the no-strike clause by telling their supervisors they don't feel safe crossing the picket line. "They've been reminded by their union leaders that they shouldn't do anything that will endanger their health and safety," she said.

She added: "We're telling our members, 'They are

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not scabs.' "

Aly Jones, an Edna Brewer Middle School secretary, said she plans to work on Thursday. She said many of her nonteaching colleagues want to respect the picket line, but they fear the potential repercussions.

"I have not received any communication from SEIU or AFSCME, either for myself or for distribution to staff-members," Jones wrote in an e-mail Tuesday. "The classified staff at my school all seem confused about what they're expected to do."

All of Oakland's adult education classes have been canceled Thursday for the strike. The school district has established a strike hot line for families, with information in five languages, at 510-835-2360.

**Read Katy Murphy's Oakland schools blog at [www.ibabuzz.com/education](http://www.ibabuzz.com/education) . Follow her at [Twitter.com/katymurphy](https://twitter.com/katymurphy) .**

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